THRONE OF BLOOD

↓ΞΓΔΛΛΝ ΔΨ ΞΙΙΔΔΓ

(1957)

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Screenplay by	Shinobu Hashimoto Ryūzō Kikushima Akira Kurosawa Hideo Oguni
Based on	*Macbeth* by William Shakespeare (uncredited)
Produced by	Sōjirō Motoki Akira Kurosawa
Starring	Toshiro Mifune Isuzu Yamada Takashi Shimura
Cinematography	Asakazu Nakai
Edited by	Akira Kurosawa
Music by	Masaru Sato
Production company	Toho Studios
Distributed by	Toho

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THE RUINS OF A CASTLE.

CHORUS.

Behold, the ruins of a castle, inhabited by deep-rooted delusion, perpetually haunted by spirits. The ruins show the fate of demonic men with treacherous desires.

見よ妄執の城の址
魂魄未だ住むごとし
それ熱心の修羅の道
昔も今もかわりなし

The ruins of Kumonosu Castle: crumbling stone walls, water of a moat with green scum, glimmering dimly. Among a vast stretch of rank weeds stands a decayed placard. On it are

the faint traces of barely legible writing: "The Ruins of Kumonosu Castle."

A gust of wind runs through the grass and ruffles the surface of the moat, a sobbing old pine tree rustles against a stone wall and in the whispering breeze through the pine tree a faint sound of a war drum and trumpet is heard.

KUMONOSU CASTLE.

The stronghold of Kumonosu Castle towering among mountains. Viewed from outside, activity in the castle cannot be perceived. The architecture of the castle, the "Black Style," profoundly depresses all who see it. A soldier approaches the gate. Riding up, the soldier, covered in blood, tumbles from his horse and knocks at the towering door.

THE CASTLE COURTYARD.

The Lord of Kumonosu Castle, Kuniharu Tsuzuki, ready for war, sits upstage center, flanked by Noriyasu Odagura, his Military Tactician and other Generals in attendance. Holding their breath, they hear the report of the bleeding 1st Messenger who kneels before them.

1st MESSENGER.
The revolt of General Fujimaki of the North Castle struck like such a thunderbolt that the Fifth and Fourth Forts fell easy prey to flames and the Third Fort had no time to prepare a defense.

KUNIHARU.
What of the Second Forth?

1st MESSENGER.
General Yoshiaki Miki of the Second Fort has rallied his collapsing forces and is now fighting with lion-like fury.

KUNIHARU.
What of the First Forth?

1st MESSENGER.
General Taketoki Washizu of the First Fort is now fighting single-handed, against some four hundred men under Inui's command. He charge across the border, on seeing the Fifth and the Fourth Forts ablaze.

KUNIHARU.
Oh, God! They've fallen into Inui's trap!

NORIYASU.
What of Washizu, how are things going in his battle?

1st MESSENGER [Fainting.]
De-sper-ate ...

[Unable to finish, the 1st Messenger slumps, unconscious.]

OLD GENERAL
Help him.

[The wounded 1st Messenger is taken away. Kuniharu and his Generals remain silent. Then Kuniharu, surveying those present, speaks.]

KUNIHARU.
Shall we venture forth, or shall we hold this castle?

[All are silent.]

NORIYASU [Calmly.]
There's no choice but to hold this castle. If we fight to repulse the attack of a winning enemy, we only lead to the fatal defeat of our own troops, I fear. The first thing to do is to

deploy our advanced guards in Kumote Forest, lead the enemy into that labyrinth and cut them to pieces. Let us try to deal them as heavy a blow as we can, then withdraw our guards and shut ourselves in the castle. There is no other path to salvation.

KUNIHARU.
Have we enough provisions?

GENERAL.
Enough for three months if we eat watery rice-gruel.

[They all remain gloomily silent.]

VOICE [Off-stage.]
If you please, my Lord. Here is a messenger from the Second Fort.

OLD GENERAL.
Let him enter.

[2nd Messenger comes in with faltering steps and, at the point of collapse, falls to his knees in front of Kuniharu.]

2nd MESSENGER.
My Lord! I congratulate you on your fortune in battle.

KUNIHARU.
Why?

2nd MESSENGER.
In the battle of the Second Fort, General Miki fought with such irresistible force that the enemy almost abandoned their attack. At that very moment, General Washizu of the First Fort, who had just defeated Inui's storming troops, seized the initiative. Shooting arrows, his men rode into the battle field and ...

KUNIHARU.
Did he! Well done, Washizu.

2nd MESSENGER.
Yes, my Lord. Before his attack the enemy gave way at once. The battle is almost decided.

[A 3rd Messenger is ushered in.]

3rd MESSENGER.
My Lord! The men of both General Washizu and Miki are now pursuing the enemy, who are starting to flee. They have pushed them back to the North Castle, intending to besiege them.

[4th Messenger hurries in.]

4th MESSENGER.
General Fujimaki of the North Castle sues for peace, offering to become a bonze.

KUNIHARU.
No pardon. Noriyasu!

NORIYASU.
Yes, my Lord?

KUNIHARU.
Go to the North Castle with your men and behead Fujimaki. Strengthen the border defense and if Inui shows no signs of moving his men, send Washizu and Miki back to the castle. I myself shall reward them for their service.

NORIYASU.
I understand.

KUMOTE FOREST.

[Thunderbolts and lightning, very, very frightening. Enter two galloping horsemen. They stop at the fork of a road with many branches and look around, right and left. Suddenly sunlight breaks through and outlines the figures of these two horsemen in bold relief. A horrifying fresh smell of war arises from the two armored figures, who are smeared with blood, mud and rain. They are Taketoki Washizu and Yoshiaki Miki.]

YOSHIAKI [Looking up at the sky.]
What a day today! I have never seen such strange weather. Clouds again cover the sun, more thunder and lightning.

TAKETOKI.
Let's hurry up. I'd rather not lose any time in seeing how delighted our Lord will be to hear the news.

[He whips his horse and heads off. Yoshiaki follows him. They gallop as fast as their horses can carry them and then stop at a fork in the road.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
What? This is?

[They stare at each other.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
This ... this is where we stopped out horses before, is it not?

YOSHIAKI.
Well. Behold, these trampled hoof prints!

TAKETOKI.
How strange! Do you really think that this is Kumote Forest?

YOSHIAKI
Certainly.

TAKETOKI.
Then, one more gallop will take us to the castle, you know.

YOSHIAKI.
Yes.

TAKETOKI.
But ... we have already been galloping in the forest for some time, yet there is no sign of an exit.

YOSHIAKI [Laughing.]
Surely worthy of the name: Kumote, Cobweb Forest. Like the threads of a spider, roads run in various directions and misguide the enemy. This is really a strategic position for our Kumonosu Castle.

TAKETOKI.
Nonsense! Unlike our enemy, we, who belong to the castle, are familiar with the forest, are we not?

[Taketoki fires an arrow from his bow, hitting the root of a huge tree, as lightning flashes and thunder rolls. As if answering the shot, a strange laughter reverberates throughout the forest.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
You heard that. An evil spirit, it's the work of an evil spirit.

YOSHIAKI.
Hum.

[He cradles his spear.]

YOSHIAKI [cont.]
Well, on the honor of my spear, I'll get us out of this forest.

TAKETOKI.
Yes. Witness, God of War, my arrow and bow!

[Taketoki fixes another arrow in his bow while Yoshiaki brandishes his spear overhead. They break suddenly into a gallop, yelling war cries. Two men gallop; Yoshiaki brandishing his spear in every direction and Taketoki shooting arrows before them, continuing to gallop. Two men are shrouded in lightning, thunder and the demonic laughter. Suddenly, their horses come to a complete halt and cannot be pressed forward. Staring at their frightened eyes, gasping sounds and trembling ears Yoshiaki suddenly stops spurring his horse. Looking ahead he shouts in horror.]

YOSHIAKI.
My gods! What's that?

[Taketoki looks hard to the front. Ahead of them is a place rather sparsely wooded, leaving a small open space of grass. There stands a small straw-thatched cottage, deserted. The thunder and lightning, which were so violent a moment ago, have mysteriously abated. A beam of light falling through the trees calmly shines upon the cottage.]

YOSHIAKI [cont.]
Have you ever seen that cottage?

TAKETOKI.
No, I have never seen such a thing. This also must be the work of an evil spirit.

YOSHIAKI.
But ...

TAKETOKI.
Look at our horses! Their fear is real.

[Taketoki fixes a new arrow to the string and draws it to the full, aiming at the cottage. At that moment, a delicate, sad song reaches them from inside. Taketoki, involuntarily, relaxes his bow. The two men look at each other. They approach the cottage as if drawn by the song and peep inside.]

INSIDE THE COTTAGE.

[An old woman sits alone, singing and spinning threads.]

OLD WOMAN.
O miserable, miserable! The life of flowers is too transient, only turning to decomposed matter.

あさましや あさましや
花の命は短くて
やがて腐肉となるものを

[Taketoki and Yoshiaki are quiet, watching the Old Woman.]

OLD WOMAN [Singing.]
Reaching the last stage of delusion, rotten flesh turns to flowers.
Offensive odor becomes perfume. What a thrilling life for man! O how delightful, delightful!

迷いの果てに行きつけば
腐肉破れて花と咲き
悪臭かえて香を放つ
面白の人の命
おもしろや　おもしろや

[Taketoki and Yoshiaki enter. They surround the Old Woman' Taketoki, ready with his arrow drawn and Yoshiaki, with his spear poised.]

YOSHIAKI.
What are you? A human or a devil in the flesh?

TAKETOKI.
Hey, you! No words? You surely can speak, since you can sing.

OLD WOMAN.
Yes, Taketoki Washizu, head of the First Fort.

TAKETOKI.
What! Do you know me?

OLD WOMAN.
Yes, Lord of the North Castle from this evening.

TAKETOKI.
What? I, Lord of the North Castle from this evening?

OLD WOMAN.
Yes, my Lord. And, Lord of Kumonosu Castle hereafter.

TAKETOKI.
Stop this babbling! You carry your joke too far.

OLD WOMAN.
Why get angry at such auspicious news?

TAKETOKI [High-and-mighty.]
Besides our present Lord, there is no Lord in Kumonosu Castle.

The Old Woman meets Taketoki's gaze fearlessly with a calm yet baleful smile.

OLD WOMAN.
How foolish a man is! Why be afraid to plumb your own heart?

TAKETOKI [Seething.]
You evil spirit!

[He draws back his bowstrings.]

YOSHIAKI.
Wait! Even though this woman might be a devil in the flesh, she doesn't look as if she is chattering nonsense for nothing, since your arrow is aimed at just above her breast. I'll question her seriously. [To the Old Woman] Listen, carefully! Can you see the future as our eyes see the present?

OLD WOMAN.
Yes, General Yoshiaki Miki, head of the Second Fort and head of the First Fort from this evening.

YOSHIAKI.
What ... head of the First Fort from this evening? Well, then, what of my future wealth and ranks?

OLD WOMAN.
Your fortune is lesser and greater than General Washizu's.

YOSHIAKI.
What? What do you mean?

OLD WOMAN.
Your son is to be Lord of Kumonosu Castle hereafter.

[The two men look at each other, shocked. Then, when they return their eyes to the Old Woman they are startled to see no sign of her remains. They rush out of the cottage to their horses.]

KUMOTE FOREST. AN OLD BATTLEGROUND.

[On horseback Taketoki and Yoshiaki look around. There is no one to be seen. When they look back the cottage has also disappeared. A small hill has appeared where the cottage once stood. A heap of skeletons in armor is visible if one concentrates. The armor is decayed and completely covered with rust and weeds. Both Taketoki and Yoshiaki, stricken with horror, remain standing and staring at the heap.]

THE EDGE OF THE FOREST.

[Taketoki and Yoshiaki, with absent-minded expressions on their faces, still on horseback, exit the forest.]

YOSHIAKI.
Behold! There's our castle. Now a short gallop will bring us to the castle.

TAKETOKI.
One second! I'm completely exhausted. My armor feels unusually heavy.

YOSHIAKI
Ah, no wonder. We have already ridden our horses to death three times since the battle yesterday. Shall we rest for awhile?

TAKETOKI.
Yes.

[Dismounting, they sit down on the grass and peer up at the distant castle.]

YOSHIAKI
Awfully sleepy. My only hope is to get some sound sleep.

TAKETOKI.
I myself feel as if now in a dream. I wonder if possibly in my dream I met that devil in the flesh.

YOSHIAKI.
We say dreams are the expression of our five desires. Frankly speaking, every warrior has dreamed of becoming Lord of the castle.

TAKETOKI.
Did she not say that your son shall be Lord of that castle?

YOSHIAKI.
Why, you yourself shall become Lord of that castle, indeed!

[They both laugh.]

TAKETOKI.
Fu, fu, fu. But, before then, I am to be Lord of the North Castle?

YOSHIAKI.
I, too, will be head of the First Fort?

TAKETOKI.
A matter for congratulations, is it not?

YOSHIAKI.
Yes, indeed.

[They both laugh, then suddenly stop, brooding over the matter. Then, right at the same time, they open their mouths.]

TAKETOKI and YOSHIAKI.
But ...

[They fall silent once more.]

TAKETOKI.
What were you going to say?

YOSHIAKI.
You were about to speak, too?

TAKETOKI [Hesitatingly.]
Well, if I became Lord of the North Castle and you head of the First Fort ...

[They remain still for awhile, then Taketoki suddenly stands up and jumps on his horse. Yoshiaki also gallops off. They rush towards the castle.]

THE CASTLE COURTYARD.

[Groves of spears and arrows shining in the bonfire light. Surrounded by them, Taketoki and Yoshiaki kneel in front of Lord Kuniharu Tsuzuki, on whom other generals are also waiting. Kuniharu presents Taketoki with a splendid long sword.]

KUNIHARU
Taketoki Washizu, you rendered distinguished service in battle! From this evening, you are Lord of the North Castle!

[Taketoki and Yoshiaki both give a start. Taketoki raises his sword over his head with trembling hands, as a token of gratitude. Kuniharu takes another sword and presents it to Yoshiaki.]

KUNIHARU [cont.]
Yoshiaki Miki, your service was no less distinguished. You are head of the First Fort from

this evening!

[Both Yoshiaki and Taketoki give another start. Another roaring cheer. Yoshiaki, with trembling hands, also raises the sword over his head in gratitude. They stand up and bow. Soldiers congratulate them by twanging bowstrings and beating shields. Among their cheers, Taketoki and Yoshiaki, empathizing with each other with strange keenness, silently go back to their seats, staring.]

DISTANT VIEW OF THE NORTH CASTLE.

[Green rice fields everywhere. At the top of a little high mountain far away, the North Castle is seen with a thicket of assorted green trees at its back.]

THE COURTYARD OF THE NORTH CASTLE.

[In the brilliant sun of early summer, Taketoki's retainers gather here and there and busy themselves in attending to weapons, arms and horses. Bush warblers singing in a hill at the back. Sprightly neighs of young horses. Everything in the scenery is peaceful and blooming. A group of retainers mend armor, sitting in a circle. One of them gives a wide yawn.]

1ST RETAINER.
How peaceful!

2ND RETAINER.
Yes, it seems we are in Paradise.

3RD RETAINER.
What a difference between living in the fort and living comfortably in the castle! Greatness is really relative, isn't it?

4TH RETAINER.
We retainers are also fortunate, but imagine how satisfied our Lord and lady are!

INSIDE THE NORTH CASTLE. TAKETOKI'S ROOM.

[Compared with the brightness of the fresh green outside, it is very chilly and dark here. Taketoki and his wife, Asaji, sit facing each other in the room. Bush warblers sing. Asaji, with a pale and immobile face like a Noh mask, talks with frequent pauses.]

ASAJI.
Did you ... make up your mind?

[Taketoki raises his face in confusion and talks in a restless tone.]

TAKETOKI.
I dreamed an awful dream ... In fact I have been bewitched. No more delusion! The Lord of Kumonosu Castle ... to have such an inordinate desire ...

ASAJI [Calmly.]
You wouldn't say that it's an inordinate desire ... You know well there's not warrior who does not crave it.

TAKETOKI.
No, I ... I feel all right as I am! I'll be devoted to the discharge of my duties as head of the North Castle. I'd rather live peacefully, content with my lot.

ASAJI [Monotone.]
You won't have that peace.

TAKETOKI.
If ... if General Yoshiaki Miki should reveal the prophecy of the evil spirit of Kumote Forest ... to our Lord, then ...

[Frightened, Taketoki stares hard at Asaji.]

ASAJI [cont.]
Then, we won't be left as we are. Our Lord, taking you for a usurper threatening ... he will surely besiege the North Castle with his men without delay.

[Staring at Asaji aghast, Taketoki broods.]

ASAJI [cont.]
Only two choices exist ... sitting and waiting to be killed by our Lord ... or killing our Lord to become Lord of Kumonosu Castle yourself!

TAKETOKI [Panicky.]
It is high treason to kill our Lord!

ASAJI [Monotone.]
The same Lord ... he himself ascended the throne by killing his previous Lord, as you well know.

TAKETOKI.
The reason was ... that the previous Lord distrusted our Lord and tried to kill him! Our Lord trusts me! I say, he treats me most kindly!

ASAJI.
Because he doesn't know what's at the bottom of your heart.

TAKETOKI [Greasy sweat drips from his face.]
At the bottom of my heart? Why, there's nothing shameful in me!

ASAJI [Another sinister smile.]
You tell a lie.

TAKETOKI [High-handedly.]
Nonsense! I ... I am satisfied as head of the North Castle!

ASAJI.
Even though it is true ... would our Lord believe it ... after having head about that prophecy from General Miki?

TAKETOKI.
Miki ... From our childhood Miki has been my closest comrade in arms. We won't play such a mean trick!

ASAJI.
In this world, struggling for fame and distinction, parents kill their own children and children kill their parents. This is a corrupt age when we must kill others to avoid being killed. I'm worried to death ... that General Miki might have already ... revealed it to our Lord ...

TAKETOKI [Agitated.]
Asaji, don't be so distrustful!

[At that moment, a flurry of footsteps is heard. One of the Retainers comes to the threshold of the room and kneels.]

1st RETAINER.
If you please, my Lord. Some three hundred men of Kumonosu Castle are silently stationed in the forest to our rear.

TAKETOKI.
What?

[Startled, Taketoki states at Asaji's face. She does not change her Noh mask-like expression. With flurry of steps, another retainer runs in and kneels before them.]

2nd RETAINER.
If you please, my Lord. We see a tremendous crowd of men in arms, in every forest and in every mountain cave that surrounds this North Castle. They look like men from Kumonosu Castle, but they advance quietly, holding their banners and spears down and making their

horses bite something in the mouths.

[Taketoki, aghast, stares at Asaji's face again. She does not make a motion, but conveys a terrible, strong will in her expressionless face. The flurried beat of horses' hoofs. Taketoki, snatching up his sword, stands.]

THE NORTH CASTLE. THE FRONT GATE.

[A horseman approaches, galloping amid clouds of dust. He stops at the front gate and shouts in a loud voice.]

HERALD.
If you please, Taketoki Washizu, Lord of the North Castle. Our Senior Lord is coming!

THE NORTH CASTLE. AN OPEN CORRIDOR.

[Taketoki violently dashes out of the room and shouts.]

TAKETOKI.
What's the matter?

[An elderly-looking 3rd Retainer runs in.]

3rd RETAINER.
Sir, our Senior Lord is coming.

[Taketoki jumps down on the ground and runs out.]

TAKETOKI.
Everyone, come out! Get ready for the meeting!

THE FRONT GATE.

[Taketoki comes running with a shout.]

TAKETOKI.
Everyone, come out! Get ready for the meeting!

[The Herald, hearing Taketoki shout, speaks to him.]

HERALD.
General Washizu, it's really not necessary. Our senior Lord is paying a surreptitious visit, only for hunting. There's no need for such a pompous gathering.

[Taketoki stares at him, half in doubt.]

ON THE MAIN ROAD.

[Kuniharu Tsuzuki, lightly dressed in his hunting suit, comes on horseback, feeling relaxed. His heir Kuniharu, Noriyasu Odagura, Yoshiaki Miki and several generals follow him, all in hunting suits and talking cheerfully. Behind them, beaters follow with game such as wild boars and deer on their shoulders. Everything looks peaceful and there is no indication of hostility.]

INSIDE THE NORTH CASTLE. TAKETOKI'S ROOM.

[Kuniharu sits in the highest front seat and Kuniharu, Noriyasu, Yoshiaki and others sit alongside. Taketoki and Asaji lie prostrate before Kuniharu.]

TAKETOKI.
I sincerely congratulate you on taking such a good bag.

KUNIHARU.
Well ... are you surprised, since we came so suddenly? To tell the truth, the hunting is only diversionary tactics ...

[Taketoki stiffens.]

KUNIHARU [cont.]
In the guise of hunters, our soldiers advance. I'm going to attack Inui.

[Taketoki, unintentionally, raises him face and stares at Kuniharu. Surprised looks on everyone's face as well. Only Noriyasu gives a slight nod as if he already knew everything.]

KUNIHARU [cont.]
I can endure Inui's behavior no longer. When he caused trouble, helping the revolt of Fujimaki, we held back our pursuit ... since we were looking forward to an occasion such as today. Listen! We'll station our headquarter in the North Castle. We'll gather the main force on the border and then attack the enemy when we are fully prepared ... Before then, everything is secret ... You understand?

[They all nod approval.]

KUNIHARU [cont.]
Taketoki!

TAKETOKI.
Yes, my Lord?

KUNIHARU.
Yoshiaki!

YOSHIAKI.
Yes, my Lord?

KUNIHARU
I will reward you for your service in the precious battle. I order Taketoki to serve as head of the van of the attack and Yoshiaki to take charge of Kumonosu Castle during my absence!

TAKETOKI and YOSHIAKI.
Yes, at your command.

[Both men, deeply moved with joy, bow prostrate. So does Asaji, but remains expressionless.]

INSIDE THE NORTH CASTLE. A HALL. NIGHT.

[By the light of a candle Taketoki and Asaji sit, facing each other.]

TAKETOKI.
Asaji, now your suspicious nature should be satisfied. Our Lord trust me, I'm sure. In your suspicious mind, brooding over Yoshiaki's slander, an evil spirit lies hidden.

ASAJI
I ... do not think so.

TAKETOKI.
Why not? Listen ... you see, our Lord trusts me above all others ... That is why he gave me such an important duty as head of the van.

ASAJI.
The leader of the vanguard will be a target, both from the front and the back.

[Taketoki, surprised, says nothing.]

ASAJI [cont.]
How wicked our Lord is, I dare say, occupying the North Castle by the power of eloquence, leaving Kumonosu Castle in charge of trusted Miki, without exposing him to danger, but exposing a man like you, whom he hates, to arrows and spears.

[Taketoki remains silent.]

ASAJI [cont.]
General Miki will plays the spectator on the watchtower of the castle and, with a smiling face, will enjoy the end of his optimistic friend: you.

[Taketoki is confused.]

IN FRONT OF THE BEDROOM.

[In the open corridor, flooded with bonfires, three strong Soldiers stand guard. Looking in one direction, all of them ready their spears.]

1st SOLDIER.
Who's there?

1st RETAINER.
We are retainers from the North Castle.

2nd SOLDIER.
This is the bedroom of our Lord. Even though you are from the North Castle, you cannot enter this evening.

2nd RETAINER.
We won't go near his bedroom. We only go to open the never-opened room.

3rd SOLDIER.
The never-opened room?

3rd RETAINER.
Yes, it is there that Fujimaki, the former Lord of North Castle, killed himself. We keep it closed, since the floor which was stained with his slimy blood and cannot be cleaned.

1st SOLDIER.
Then why do you open it on this particular night?

2nd RETAINER.
We are going to make a bed there for my Lord, as our senior Lord occupies out Lord's bedroom.

2nd SOLDIER.
Your duty is well served. Please come in.

[They leave with a bow.]

IN FRONT OF THE NEVER-OPENED ROOM.

[The Retainers enter. Opening the door, they light the inside with torches and peer uneasily into the room.]

1st RETAINER.
How strange! I, the man who has crossed a sea of blood many a time in battle, now shudders at the sight of this bloody stain whenever I see it.

2nd RETAINER.
Because it is the blood of a dog ... the blood of treason and injustice. It is the blood of a coward, who rebelled, was defeated, then begged for mercy and life.

[Sound of cuckoos from far off.]

3rd RETAINER.
Damn it! The bird of ill omen sings tonight ... Come on, let's finish our job and get our of here as soon as possible.

THE GREAT HALL.

[Taketoki sits, motionless, a slave to his doubt. Asaji continues talking calmly.]

ASAJI.
You say that I'm too suspicious ... but even I could not proceed without believing that prophecy.

[Taketoki looks surprised.]

ASAJI [cont.]
Please, consider what is happening. Observe that arrangements for the fulfillment of the prophecy have already been made.

[Taketoki is, once more, confused.]

ASAJI [cont.]
Is this not enough to convince you? Our Lord flew into your reach all by himself.

[Taketoki is appalled.]

ASAJI [cont.]
If you fail tonight, you will never have such a good opportunity again.

TAKETOKI.
What kind of pretext can I have for committing treason? Nay, on what pretext can I command all the troops?!

ASAJI.
Even though pretending to trust you, our Lord leaves the guard to Noriyasu's men, which is an unexpected piece of good luck for us.

[Taketoki looks confused again.]

ASAJI [cont.]
You ply the guards with warm saké containing a drug, stab our Lord as soon as they fall asleep and cry out to all of the troops that it's the deed of Noriyasu!

[Taketoki makes no reply. The sound of cuckoos is heard once more.]

ASAJI [cont.]
How do you interpret the voice of the cuckoo? Does it not ask whether you risked your life for the whole world? I hear it that way. To me the note of a cuckoo is a voice from above, encouraging you to aim at the whole world, with Kumonosu Castle as the base of operations.

[They stare hard at each other. Footsteps. 1st and 2nd RETAINERS enter.]

1st RETAINER.
My Lord and Lady, we have made your beds.

ASAJI.
Thanks for your service.

[They are going to leave with a bow. Asaji calls them back.]

ASAJI [cont.]
Well, the guards of our senior Lord, how are they doings

1st RETAINER.
They are keeping all night vigil, with their spears ready.

ASAJI.
O my! Then, I'll treat them to saké.

[Standing up calmly, she goes in the darkness of the corner of the room. She comes out with the bottle of saké.]

IN FRONT OF THE BEDROOM.

[Bonfires dwindle. Near the fire, the three Guards sleeping like the dead. A bottle of saké overturned lays near them. A rustle of clothes. The figure of Asaji appears dimply through the darkness and spies on the guards.]

THE NEVER-OPENED ROOM.

[Taketoki alone sits in the center of the room. His shadow flickers with the light of the candle. A gloomy atmosphere. Taketoki, with glaring, bloody eyes, stares at something: a stain of dark blood splashed on the wainscot. Taketoki averts his eyes from it. However, on the floor where his eyes are fixed, there is a grotesque mark drawn in blood. Taketoki, unable to stand the atmosphere, suddenly stands up, but dares not move, seeing Asaji enter. Asaji, with spear in her hand, calmly enters. Taketoki stares at Asaji, driven to the wall. Asaji approaches him and hands the spear to him. Then, both, with faces as white as a sheet, stare at each other.]

[The cuckoo cries for a third time.]

[Looking up at the sky, Taketoki stares at Asaji for a moment with a grotesque smile and leaves falteringly. Asaji sees him off and calmly sits down. She sits firmly in the same posture without the slightest movement.A long interval. With a horrifying expression on his face, spattered with blood, Taketoki dashes in, tries to stand erect, supported by his spear, but sinks down on the ground. Seeing him squat, Asaji snatches the spear from his hand and leaves.]

IN FRONT OF THE BEDROOM.

[Asaji enters. She puts the blood-stained spear in the hand of one of the sleeping guards.]

THE NEVER-OPENED ROOM.

[Taketoki, sits gasping with his hands on the floor. Asaji returns. She goes to the corner of the room in haste and washed her blood-stained hands in a basin.
Taketoki, with vacant eyes, gazes at her washing. Throwing a contemptuous look at

Taketoki, Asaji runs out of the room.]

THE NEVER-OPENED ROOM. OUTSIDE.

[Asaji dashes out and screams.]
ASAJI.
Traitors! Traitors!

THE NEVER-OPENED ROOM.

[Taketoki, who had been sitting dumbfounded, suddenly comes to himself and runs out.]

THE NEVER-OPENED ROOM. OUTSIDE.

[Dashing out of the room, Taketoki thunders at the highest pitch of his voice.]

TAKETOKI.
Everyone of you, come out! The worst possible tragedy has happened to our senior Lord!

THE BEDROOM. OUTSIDE.

[Hearing alarm shouts and the rush of footsteps, three Guards, who were lying asleep, stagger to their feet and struggle desperately. Taketoki, dashing in, cuts one of them aslant through the shoulder.]

TAKETOKI.
Traitors!

A CAMP.

A heavy morning mist. A war gong, a trumpet, a war cry far away like a tidal wave. Spears are laid low and horses run amok. Floods of spears, arrows and pennons borne by armored warriors surge about. Completely tattered. Against the flow, Kuniharu on horseback is

shouting with a threatening look.

KUNIHARU.
Let go! Let go!

[Noriyasu also on horseback, is holding hard the bit of Kunimaru's horse.]

NORIYASU.
Don't lose your head. To the castle for the present, my young Lord!

KUNIHARU.
Nay! Let go! This is surely Taketoki's scheme! If we fly, leaving the matter as it is, we'll be stigmatized as traitors.

NORIYASU.
Hark! My young Lord! If we die to no purpose, the rights and wrongs of the matter can never be judged!

[Taketoki's retainers surround these two.]

RETAINERS.
Traitors! Murderers of our Senior Lord!

[Noriyasu draws his sword and pounds with its flat at the rear of Kunimaru's horse, which springs to a gallop. Sweeping away the retainers of Taketoki, Noriyasu follows Kuniharu.]

TAKETOKI.
Pay no attention to the small game! Our enemy is Noriyasu!

[Thundering, Taketoki gallops forward.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
Where's Noriyasu? Where is he?

1st RETAINER.
By a hair's breadth.

TAKETOKI.
Did he flee?

2nd RETAINER.
Yes, towards the castle with our young Lord.

TAKETOKI.
What?! Towards the castle, protecting our young Lord? Damn it! Yoshiaki Miki, who is guarding the castle ... if he lets them in the castle ... no, no excuse
to make to our senior Lord if we allow such wicked men in our castle. Follow me! Follow me!

[Taketoki gives his horse a kick and begins to gallop. A party of horsemen follow him.]

A FIELD ENVELOPED IN FOG.

[Noriyasu and Kuniharu keep galloping. Taketoki and his Retainer, seven or eight, follow them.]

KUMOTE FOREST.

[Noriyasu and Kuniharu dash into the forest. Taketoki and his retainers also dash into the forest in pursuit.]

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FOREST.

[Noriyasu and Kuniharu dash out of the forest. After awhile, Taketoki and his retainers dash after them.]

TAKETOKI.
Damn it!

[Turning pale, Taketoki reins up his horse. Several horsemen after him pull up their horses in rapid succession.]

KUMONOSU CASTLE. THE ROAD LEADING TO THE FRONT GATE.

[Noriyasu and Kuniharu gallop up the road.]

THE EDGE OF THE FOREST.

[Taketoki glares fiercely at them, with bloodshot eyes.]

KUMONOSU CASTLE. THE FRONT GATE.
[Noriyasu and Kuniharu swing down from their saddles and hasten to the door of the gate.]

NORIYASU [Pounding on the door.]
If you please, I must speak to General Miki! Our Senior Lord, on his way to the punitive encounter against Inui, died an ignominious death, due to the treason of Taketoki Washizu. I, Noriyasu Odagura, accompanying our young Lord, Kunimaru, cut our way through the enemy and managed to return to the castle! I say, open the door immediately!

[The interior of the castle is silent.]

NORIYASU [cont.]
If you please, General Miki! Taketoki's pursuing force are approaching! Open the door at once!

[Everything is hushed and deadly still in the castle. Noriyasu violently knocks at the door, losing patience.]

NORIYASU [cont.]
Open the door! Open the door!

[With a keen, whizzing sound, an arrow pierces the ground close to Noriyasu's feet. Noriyasu and Kuniharu are thunderstruck.]

THE EDGE OF THE FOREST.

[Taketoki and his retainers, standing in their saddles, look closely at Noriyasu and Kuniharu with curiosity, shading their eyes with their hands.]

THE FRONT GATE.

[A shower of arrows from the two towers pour down on Noriyasu and Kuniharu, who are shouting.]

THE EDGE OF THE FOREST.

[Taketoki and his retainers are stunned at the unexpected sight.]

THE FRONT GATE.

[Noriyasu and Kuniharu, warding off a shower of arrows with their swords, jump on their horses and retreat.]

THE EDGE OF THE FOREST.

[Taketoki's retainers, excited, prepare to chase them.]

TAKETOKI.
Wait!

THE FRONT GATE.

[Noriyasu and Kuniharu, galloping back, scarcely have looked at Taketoki and his retainers in the distance when they change their direction and gallop towards the mountain at one side.]

ON THE EDGE OF THE FOREST.

Taketoki's impatient retainers.

1st RETAINER.
My Lord, let's pursue them!

TAKETOKI.
Wait, wait a second! We can't take action without knowing Yoshiaki's real intention. If he intends to remain in the castle after our Senior Lord's death, Yoshiaki Miki himself is our present enemy.

[He glares at the castle with resentment. Clatter of hoofs. Taketoki and his Retainers turn, fully alert, towards the sound. One of his retainers dashes out of the forest, galloping.]

4th RETAINER.
My Lord! Here's a message from our lady.

TAKETOKI.
What is it?

RETAINER.
If General Miki does not open the door of the castle, proceed with the hearse of our senior Lord and ...

TAKETOKI.
Hmm!

[He nods vigorously and looks up at the castle again.]

KUMONOSU CASTLE. A PANORAMIC VIEW.

[The castle, still hushed and silent and Taketoki's retainers, lined up in front of the castle. Holding their spears, arrows and pennons low, they all reverently wait in line and guard the hearse covered with white silk, which several of them bear on their shoulders. Taketoki, at the head of the party, spurs his horse and gallops towards the castle.]

KUMONOSU CASTLE. THE FRONT GATE.

[Taketoki dashes up, reigns in his horse and thunders at the castle.]

TAKETOKI.
Open the door! The return of our Lord! Open the door! I, Taketoki Washizu, enter the castle, guarding the hearse of our Lord!

[After this shout, he turns back his horse.]

KUMONOSU CASTLE. A PANORAMIC VIEW.

[Taketoki, having turned around, stands before lines of his soldiers and gives an order to proceed, waving his hand. The files of soldiers, reverently moving.]

THE FRONT GATE.

[Silence.]

THE ROAD LEADING TO THE FRONT GATE.

[Taketoki proceeding in silence and the files of soldiers after him, guarding the hearse.]

THE FRONT GATE.

[Silence.]

THE ROAD LEADING TO THE FRONT GATE.

[Taketoki, proceeding and the hearse, proceeding. Fearing that they may be shot by arrows ... a succession of facial expressions of soldiers filled with strain.]

THE FRONT GATE.

[Silence.]

THE ROAD LEADING TO THE FRONT GATE.

[Taketoki, proceeding and the hearse, proceeding. The files of soldiers approach the front gate reverently in an extremely strained atmosphere. At that very moment ...]

THE FRONT GATE.

[The door silently opens. Yoshiaki on horseback dashes out. Taketoki pulls up his horse with a start. Yoshiaki gallops his horse and stops just in front of him. They stare fixedly at each other. A pause. After a little pause, changing the direction of his horse, Yoshiaki rides side by side with Taketoki. They pass together through the front gate in silence.]

INSIDE THE CASTLE.

[The men in the castle kneeling to meet the hearse, Taketoki and Yoshiaki ride in silence through them. Taketoki casts a glance at the tearful waiting women, who are kneeling in a group.]

TAKETOKI.
Where's our lady?

YOSHIAKI.
She killed herself.

[Taketoki is amazed.]

YOSHIAKI [cont.]
She told me that she couldn't stand to witness the enemy being given this castle before her very eyes.

[They are both silent for awhile. Yoshiaki suddenly speaks.]

YOSHIAKI [cont.]
The evil spirit of Kumote Forest made a good guess, didn't she?

[Taketoki glares.]

YOSHIAKI [cont.]
After the death of out Lord, Inui will surely attack this castle. A person of considerable strength ... anyhow only your strength would be able to defend this castle against the enemy ... with this reason, I'm going to appeal to the members at the main conference.

[Again they are both silent for awhile. Taketoki makes as if to start speaking but Yoshiaki checks him with his eyes.]

YOSHIAKI [cont.]
Let us talk it over at our leisure.

KUMONOSU CASTLE. THE FRONT TOWER.

[Taketoki's retainers, several of them, are looking down over forests and green rice fields

which stretch far away under their eyes.]

1ST RETAINER
Where's the North Castle?

2ND RETAINER
At the foot of that mountain ... there.

1ST RETAINER.
Well, looking down on it form here, it's really small, isn't its

2ND RETAINER.
Yes, greatness certainly is relative. We are fortunate! Really fortunate.

1ST RETAINER.
On top of that, if a princely heir is born in our household, nothing will give us greater joy.

INSIDE THE CASTLE. A ROOM IN THE INNER CASTLE.

[The quality of the room, its furniture and the garments of Taketoki and Asaji, who are sitting there, are noticeably better. Only their expressions have not changed. But a gloomier atmosphere than before hands over the room. At length, Asaji speaks.]

ASAJI.
Then ... it's decided ... are you going to hand over this castle to the son of General Miki?

[Taketoki studies Asaji's expressionless face and speaks.]

TAKETOKI.
At the main conference Miki didn't concede a point, recommending me as the Lord of this castle. I owe what I am to his constant friendship. I must reward him for his friendship.

ASAJI.
I do not think so.

[Taketoki looks surprised.]

ASAJI [cont.]
It is not because of his friendship that he recommended you ... It was because of ... you know it well.

TAKETOKI [Embarrassed.]
Don't talk like that ... Yoshiaki is courageous. A man of resources ... he is the worst enemy, but surely the best ally. If I decide on his son as my successor, he will be willing to work for me. Now, understand me! Tonight's banquet is an important occasion to announce my successor. Extend the utmost courtesy both to Yoshiaki and his son.

ASAJI.
I ... I did not stain these hands of mine with blood in his son's favor.

TAKETOKI [Stares at Asaji in astonishment.]
My reign is only for a single generation ... and then Yoshiaki's descendants will succeed me. If I believe the prophecy which we head in Kumote Forest ... it cannot be helped, you know.

ASAJI.
I hate it.

TAKETOKI.
But ... look, we have no child and someday we must decide upon our heir.

ASAJI [Calmly.]
I ... I'm expecting a child.

TAKETOKI [Thunderstruck.]
What? You, expecting a child?

ASAJI
Yes.

[Taketoki's face flushes in an instant. A violent whirlwind rages in his head. With glinting eyes he begins to walk up and down the length of the room restlessly.]

THE NORTH CASTLE. THE COURTYARD.

[A runaway horse, raging. Yoshiaki's retainers, running after it.]

Yoshiaki and Yoshiteru come out on the open corridor.

YOSHIAKI.
You fools! What's the matter?!

[One of his retainers runs to them and, feeling embarrassed, kneels.]

RETAINER.
Today Asakaze, who is ordinarily very tame, is beyond our control. We tried to put a saddle on him, but in his rage he tore off the bridle and got free.

YOSHITERU.
Father, this is a bad omen. Please, give up today's attendance at the castle.

YOSHIAKI.
Certainly not! We are guest of honor for today's banquet. To fail to attend is out of the question.

[Yoshiaki enters the castle. Yoshiteru follows him.]

INSIDE THE NORTH CASTLE.

[Yoshiteru, running after his father closely, speaks.]

YOSHITERU.
Father, as I already told you, I'm much obliged for your kind provision, but ...

YOSHIAKI.
What objection do you have to it?

YOSHITERU.
Oh, no objection ... but, I just can't believe such a prophecy of an evil spirit ... Absurd!

YOSHIAKI.
Absurd? I saw it myself. And, the prophecy came true in Washizu's case. In my case, too.

YOSHITERU.
Such an expectation itself shows that you are bewitched. Bewitched by an evil spirit, you build up the events as she told you, with your own hands and then you believe in the fulfillment of her prophecy ... I doubt your sanity.

YOSHIAKI.
If you can't believe it, you don't have to ... but ... Washizu's proposal that he wants you as his successor is neither a dream nor an illusion.

[Yoshiteru is silent.]

YOSHIAKI [cont.]
Listen! You are to have the castle for you own, without shedding blood and strewing the ground with corpses. In this world you can never be more fortunate. I question your own sanity in refusing such a proposal!

[Again Yoshiteru says nothing.]

THE FRONT GATE OF THE NORTH CASTLE.

[A train of attendants are ready for departure. Two saddled horses are gorgeously attired. One of them, Asakaze, is still in a rage and is giving trouble to the retainers who are holding him.]

THE SAME [NIGHT.]

[Making a bonfire, the Retainers guard the gate. One of them takes off his leggings and presses his hand on his leg. He talks.]

1ST RETAINER.
Narrowly escapes breaking the bone of my leg! Fie on Asakaze, what made him so unruly? Thanks to him I couldn't accompany my Lord.

One of his fellows teases him.

2ND RETAINER.
You mean, "Thanks to him I missed a treat of saké at the castle."

[They all hoot at him. Suddenly there is the clattering of a horse's hoofs. They all strain their ears. The clattering of hoofs rapidly approaches them. The retainers stand up in haste and surround the gate with their spears ready.]

1ST RETAINER.
Who's there?

[Asakaze pops up out of the darkness startling the Retainers. They all give a collected sigh of relief. Asakaze answers with a mournful neigh.]

KUMONOSU CASTLE. THE GRAND HALL.

[One of the Generals is dancing, accompanied by the song of others, who sit on both sides of the hall.]

SONG.
Such being the case, what men do in this world burning ourselves with the flames of five Desires, bathing ourselves in the water of the five impurities, piling up our sins more and more.

それ人間のなりわいは
五慾の炎に身をこがし
五濁の水に身をさらし
業の上は業を積み

Another of the Generals talks to his companion, who sits next to him.

GENERAL.
I wonder what happened to General Miki?

[Two seats of honor are unoccupied. Taketoki, who sits at the front, is gulping down saké, waited upon by Asaji. While drinking he often glances at the seats with an extremely waxy face.]

GENERAL [cont.]
Our Lord is also worrying about his absence. Why the absence of our guests of honors? It's unbecoming of General Miki.

SONG.
You demons out there, listen well. Beware of the example of long ago when the rebel named Chikata and the demons serving under him defied the Imperial will,they incurred the wrath of heaven.

シテ詞「いかに鬼神もたしかに聞け。
昔もさるためしあり。
千方といひし逆臣に仕へし鬼も。
王位を背く天罰にて。

[Taketoki furiously waves his hand and shouts.]

TAKETOKI.
Damn it! No more of your dance! Not this song, please.

[All those present become hushes in astonishment. Taketoki, with his bloodshot eyes, gets another glimpse of the vacant seats. He starts violently, his face becoming extraordinarily contorted. In the same seat, which was unoccupied a moment ago, now sits Yoshiaki Miki with the stamp of death on his face. Taketoki grabs at his sword and shouts, beside himself with rage.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
You devil, Yoshiaki!

[The Generals, in their astonishment, stare at Taketoki. Taketoki screams breathlessly.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
You insolent fellow! Away with you! Away!

[All the Generals stand up simultaneously.]

ASAJI [Trying to keep them quiet]
If you please, stay quiet. He has drunk too much ... My Lord! My Lord!

[Asaji tugs at Taketoki by the sleeve. Taketoki stares at his wife as if he had gone insane. Asaji forces a smile.]

ASAJI [cont.]
Of late, our Lord becomes like this when drinking too much saké.

[She laughs.]

ASAJI [cont.]
I'm afraid the violent end of our former Lord has really been a great strain on him.

[Taketoki wipes greasy sweat off his forehead and talks.]

TAKETOKI.
Fu, I'm dead drunk ...

[He looks around at all those present, who are hushed and staring.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
How about some merrymaking? It's this congratulatory banquet!

ASAJI.
Even so, this delay of General Miki ... It's rumored abroad that a spy under Inui's command has secretly sneaked into our country. I pray the General has not had an accident on his way to us.

[Taketoki, now with even gloomier eyes, stares at the vacant seats. Suddenly, again, he cries out. In the seat which had been unoccupied now sits Yoshiaki once more, with the same stamp of death on his face.]

TAKETOKI [Beside himself.]
Damn it! Why appear again? If you are so afraid of me, go ahead, draw your sword against me! I'll kill you again!

[The Generals, startled, exchange glances. Taketoki slashes at the vacant seat with his sword.]

ASAJI [Screams.]
My Lord! My Lord!

[Taketoki, who was brandishing his sword in a rage, suddenly comes to himself at Asaji's

scream and stares at the unoccupied seat, stupefied, still standing.]

ASAJI [cont.]
Please, don't be offended. The frenzy of our Lord will be gone when he becomes sober. I am sorry that your pleasure was spoiled by an unfortunate disturbance. Tonight I wish you to leave the castle.

[They leave saying farewells hurriedly. Taketoki and Asaji remain alone in the big hall.]

ASAJI [cont.]
You behaved very well ... the man who is determined to conquer the whole world in the future frightened by a ghost! How absurd!

[Asaji peers into the dark, then exclaims in a horrified tone.]

ASAJI [cont.]
Who's there?

[An armed Soldier steps out of the shadows. He bows and silently comes close to them. He presents a bundle covered with white cloth, which he was holding under his arm.]

SOLDIER.
This is what I did for General Miki.

[He opens the bundle and shows Yoshiaki's severed head to Taketoki, who turns his face away.]

TAKETOKI.
That will do. Take it away!

ASAJI [Casting a sidelong glance at the grotesque bundle.] You, of all people ... You must still ask him an important question.

TAKETOKI [Coming to himself with a start.]
What of his son?

SOLDIER.
We gave him a heavy blow, but he fled, clinging to his horse.

TAKETOKI.
What, he fled?

SOLDIER.
I have no words to apologize for it.

[Taketoki steals a glance at Asaji. Asaji with the same expressionless stare, like a Noh mask, quietly leaves the hall. Taketoki gazes after her, glares at the Soldier who throws himself at Taketoki's feet then thrusts his sword through the man. The Soldier dies, his eyes filled with hatred.]

KUMONOSU CASTLE. A PANORAMIC VIEW.

[The sky is filled with dark clouds, flowering in whirls and a violent wind is howling against the castle.]

INSIDE THE FRONT TOWER.

[Soldiers are helping themselves to saké and talking in whispering tones.]

1ST SOLDIER.
Goodness, how hard it blows!

2ND SOLDIER.
It feels as if the foundation stone of this castle is shaking.

3RD SOLDIER.
If you mean the foundation of Kumonosu Castle, it seems that it has already been shaking without wind.

4TH SOLDIER.
The generals of the castles and forts who used to come to pay their respects to our Lord every day until now ... they have been quite negligent of late.

1ST SOLDIER.
Keep clear of the devil, you know. Already two generals have been forced to kill themselves, all because of the Lord's suspicion.

2ND SOLDIER.
We can't believe that General Miki was killed by the spy under Inui's command, can we?

3RD SOLDIER.
No, indeed. They say that Yoshiteru, the eldest son of General Miki, is staying with Inui. It's not at all likely that he remains with his own father's enemy.

4TH SOLDIER.
Noriyasu Odagura and our young Lord, Kunimaru, are also staying with Inui, they say.

1ST SOLDIER.
I'm anxious to know how the matter will end ... anyhow, now we can't feel safe in this castle, even though it was impregnable before.

2ND SOLDIER
Let me tell you the story which I head from the man at the water tower; the other day he saw a crowd of rats swimming across the moat and fleeing from the castle.

3RD SOLDIER.
From olden times, people say that when a house burns, rats abandon it before anyone else.

[They become silent. The sound of the wind, blowing violently aside.]

INSIDE THE CASTLE. TAKETOKI'S ROOM.

[In a very chilly room Taketoki is seated alone, looking blankly into space with restless eyes. The rage of the wind blowing like a groan in the distance. After an interval, a wooden door silently opens. An old servant kneels outside the door.]

TAKETOKI.
What's the matter? What of our lady? How is she? Well?

[The Servant kneels before him without uttering a word.]

TAKETOKI[cont.]
You, answer me! Why, why do you remain silent?

SERVANT [With her head drooping down.]
I have no words to tell you ...

[Taketoki, frightened, stares at the Servant gripping an elbow-rest tightly.]

SERVANT [cont.]
Our lady gave birth to ... to a dead child.

TAKETOKI.
What?! A dead child?

SERVANT.
To make matters worse it had been dead for many days in the womb and our Lady herself cannot be freed from danger.

[Taketoki is silent. A gust of wind shaking the castle violently. He staggers to his feet and screams in a wailing tone.]

TAKETOKI.
You fool! Fool! Fool!

[Flurries of footsteps.]

RETAINER [Bursting in.]
Our Lord! If you please, our Lord!

[Taketoki comes to himself and dashes into the corridor.]

THE CORRIDOR.

[1st Retainer runs close to Taketoki.]

1st RETAINER.
Our Lord! Here's a messenger from the First Fort.

TAKETOKI.
From the First Fort?

A ROOM IN THE CASTLE.

A violent wind. Taketoki enters, running down the open corridor. He looks down on the messenger, who kneels before him under the steps.

TAKETOKI.
What's the matter?

1st MESSENGER.
Inui's troops have surged into our country across the border and besieged the First Fort.

TAKETOKI.
Oh, no!

1st MESSENGER.
The leading general is Noriyasu Odagura ... and accompanying young Lord Kunimaru, they plead that they are going to avenge their former Lord.

2nd MESSENGER.
The Second Fort was also besieged and the general of the attacking force is Yoshiteru Miki.

3rd MESSENGER.
The First Fort and the Second Fort, they both went over to the enemy and in cooperation with the enemy, they are now surging forward to the Third Fort.

THE GRAND HALL OF THE CASTLE.

[Taketoki, restlessly walking up and down, flanked by his Generals in attendance. They are all gloomily silent. Taketoki, glaring around impatiently, suddenly stops and berates them.]

TAKETOKI.
Fools! We have already been discussing the matter for some time. Does no one have a scheme to meet this emergency?

[They are all silent.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
I won't ask you anymore! There's no sense in asking the schemes of such fools, who have turned pale and cannot speak a word, frightened at this event!

[Taketoki again walks up and down restlessly. Thunder and lighting. With a start, Taketoki stops walking and stares fixedly into space. He suddenly begins to run.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
Get my horse ready!

THE FRONT GATE.

Thunder and lightning. Violent wind and rain. The main door swings open. Spurring his horse on, Taketoki dashes out of the door like a gust of wind.

KUMOTE FOREST.

[In the midst of thunder and lightning, Taketoki continues galloping.]

TAKETOKI [Screaming.]
You evil spirit! Come out!

[Horrible laughter answers him.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
Come out! Come out to meet me!

[More horrible laughter reverberating throughout the forest.]

KUMOTE FOREST. AN OLD BATTLEFIELD.

[Taketoki's galloping horse suddenly stops. Ahead of him is the heap of skeletons in armor. It is covered all over with weeds which are now in full blood-colored bloom.]

TAKETOKI [Shouts]
Come out to meet me, you evil spirit! I have a question to ask you! Come out!

[On the heap of skeletons sits an old woman with disheveled gray hair.]

OLD WOMAN.
Oh, you, Lord of Kumonosu Castle.

TAKETOKI.
At last you have appeared, evil spirit. Answer me clearly. Is it true that Yoshiaki's son will be Lord of Kumonosu Castle?

OLD WOMAN.
Oh, you finally came to the last stop of your delusion. How delightful, delightful!

TAKETOKI.
Damn it! If you have the power of prophecy, tell me Taketoki's fortune in war.

OLD WOMAN [Laughs gloomily.]
Be calm, human ... you won't lose the battle ... unless Kumote Forest advances towards Kumonosu Castle.

TAKETOKI [Laughing, surprised.]
Fu, fu, fu! What? Unless this forest advances? It cannot be, I'm sure.

[Taketoki passes a hand over his eyes in amazement.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
... then you mean I will never lose the battle?

[The old woman disappears with a horrible laughter and amid the heap of armor and skeletons rise up, appearing as blood-stained soldiers.]

1st GHOST [Laughing.]
If you live a demonic life, be devilish to your heart's content.

TAKETOKI.
All right! Noriyasu, Kunimaru, Yoshiaki's little monkey and Inui's fellows, I'll kill all of them.

2nd GHOST [Laughing.]
If you build up the heap of corpses, make it as big as your heart's content.

TAKETOKI.
All right! On these skeletons I'll build up the new heap of corpses!

3rd GHOST [Laughing.]
If you spill blood, let it flow to your heart's content.

TAKETOKI.
All right! I'll fill the moat of the castle with a sea of blood.

[With his face crimson, he stands on his saddle and screeches with laughter like one possessed.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
Come, Noriyasu! Join Inui if you dare and Kunimaru and Yoshiteru! Collect thousands, tens of thousands of soldiers and come to Kumonosu Castle!

THE FIELD OF WAR.

[Noriyasu's troops advance, filling the field. The troops are disposed in a battle formation shaped like the scales of a fish. The clattering sounds of armor and hoofs is heard like the roar of the sea. Clouds of dust whirl up. Flags flutter. Horses neigh. The metal mountings of helmets and spearheads glitter in the sun. Noriyasu, Kunimaru, Yoshiteru and others go into the center of the battle array.]

INSIDE THE CAMP.

[Noriyasu stares hard at Kumote Forest, which is just ahead of them and looks back on the generals who wait on him.]

NORIYASU.
We lay out our battle formation like the wings of a crane ... Now, the only advantage of Kumote forest is the roads which stretch like cobwebs. Don't take the roads where you will go astray. When you have once entered the forest, proceed through the trees straight ahead.

[The Generals dash in all directions as the formation of troops solemnly advance into the forest.]

THE BATTLE OF KUMOTE FOREST.

[Taketoki's troops, having set nets and lain down in the labyrinth of the forest, are easily cut down by Noriyasu's, who understand their tactics and have silently advanced through the trees.]

KUMONOSU CASTLE. INSIDE THE CASTLE. TAKETOKI SITS WITH HIS GENERALS.

TAKETOKI.
What?! Our troops waiting in ambush in Kumote Forest have fled back?

GENERAL.
Yes, my Lord.

TAKETOKI.
You great fools! Even though you stationed soldiers in ambush in that stronghold, do you mean that you withdrew them without taking even one fling at the enemy?

GENERAL.
Yes. The enemy is Noriyasu Odagura, who is familiar with the place and he cannot be tricked.

TAKETOKI.
Hmm!

[Grinding his teeth, Taketoki furiously stands up and runs up the stairs leading to the tower. The other Generals follow him.]

THE TOWER.

[Taketoki and his Generals come up. They look down.]

KUMOTE FOREST. PANORAMIC VIEW.

[The edge of the forest is filled to overflowing with Noriyasu's troops.]

THE TOWER.

[Taketoki, who was looking down steadily, suddenly breaks out into fits of laughter. The Generals, shocked at the news of their defeated troops and at the sight of Noriyasu's army, all stare at Taketoki with a shudder. He shrieks with laughter again.]

TAKETOKI.
Fu, fu, fu! I, of all people!

[Taketoki keeps on laughing. The Generals stare in blank amazement. At last Taketoki stops and looks about. They all look as pale as death. Taketoki glances down towards the castle interior.]

INSIDE THE CASTLE. A PANORAMIC VIEW.

[Soldiers fill the courtyard gazing up at the Tower with frightened eyes.]

THE TOWER.

[Taketoki looks about at those Soldiers and Generals and gives a broad grin. He shouts for all to hear.]

TAKETOKI.
Every one of you. Listen! The battle is won by the one who wins the final victory! The other issues of the battle are not important at all! Don't be frightened! Believe me, this is Washizu! I will never lose the battle!

[The Generals are stunned.]

INSIDE THE CASTLE. A PANORAMIC VIEW.

[The Soldiers are astir, muttering, not convinced by Taketoki's words.]

THE TOWER.

[Taketoki looks about at the Soldiers and Generals and in a strong tone he begins to talk like one possessed.]

TAKETOKI [Laughing.]
If you can't believe me, I shall reason with you. It was when I was the head of the First Fort. On my way to the castle after having defeated Fujimaki's rebel troops united with Inui's, I saw an evil spirit in Kumote Forest. The evil spirit prophesied, "You are the Lord of the North Castle from this evening and the Lord of Kumonosu Castle shortly." Behold, I am! That prophecy came true in the case of my fate, not a bit different. Now, today I galloped my horse to Kumote Forest and asked the evil spirit about my fortune in war.

[More muttering from the Soldiers.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
Congratulate yourselves! I, I will never lose the battle, even if the sky crumbles and the Earth cracks! According to the evil spirit, unless that Kumote Forest moves and advances on to this castle, I will never lose a battle. Now, every one of you ... Do you think that forest

moves?!

INSIDE THE CASTLE.

[Soldiers break into laughter.]

THE TOWER.

TAKETOKI.
Raise your weapons, if you believe my fortune in war!

INSIDE THE CASTLE. A PANORAMIC VIEW.

[Soldiers raise spears, flourish arrows and shout war cries.]

THE TOWER.

[Taketoki answers them with a smile. With a contemptuous look at his Generals, who are at their wits' end, he turns his eyes and looks down at Kumote Forest.]

KUMOTE FOREST. A PANORAMIC VIEW.

[Noriyasu's troops are deadly silent in the forest.]

THE TOWER (NIGHT).

[The outside viewed through observation holes is pitch black and a hush has fallen over the darkness. Guards are staring at the darkness.]

GUARD.
Can't see a thing. The fellows in the attacking force ... even without making bonfires ... I wonder what they are doing?

[The sound of axes resounding throughout the forest. Flapping of bird wings, frightened at something.]

GUARD [cont.]
What? What is that?

One of the Soldiers, who is sleeping with his armor on, talks in a sleepy tone.

SOLDIER.
Since they can't attack the castle, they have begun to make a stockade, I presume.

THE GRAND HALL.

[Making bonfires in the open corridor and with the doors wide open, Taketoki and several Generals are drinking saké. All of them have their armor and shoes on, with carefully worn leggings and foot gear.]

TAKETOKI.
Fu fu fu ... even Noriyasu won't be able to take measures against the noted architecture of this castle, "the Black Style." The attacking force cannot even get a glimpse of the inside of the castle ... on the other hand, from the castle they are visible to our eyes. If they dare come with all their strength, we will draw them as near as we can and shower arrows upon them. That will do it.

[Some kind of strange noise approaches. All of those present are startled.]

INSIDE THE CASTLE. THE COURTYARD.

[Strange noises from the forest approach nearer and nearer. Soldiers, some who had been sleeping at their posts, others preparing for tomorrow's battle, are aroused and raise a clamor.]

1st SOLDIER.
What's the matter?!

2nd SOLDIER.
Is it the attacking force?!

3rd SOLDIER.
Is it a night attack?!

THE GRAND HALL.

[Taketoki and all his Generals stand up simultaneously. With terrific flapping and ominous cries, a flock of wild birds, attracted by the light, fly into the room. They beat their wings against the ceiling and wooden door, screech and fall thick and fast upon the floor. The Generals sense something ominous and stand upright. Taketoki looks at them and laughs uproariously.]

TAKETOKI [Laughing.]
Why do you turn pale, you stupid generals? Why not regard this as a good omen? What a shame you are ready to run away at the sight of a good omen that a large enemy force will fall into our hands.

[Dwn. The bonfires are out and a morning mist hovers in the dawn. Taketoki is alone dozing, while leaning on an elbow-rest. Suddenly excited voices from the inner part of the castle.]

WOMEN.
Oh, my lady ... My lady ...

[With a start, Taketoki strains his ears. The interior is hushed and still. Taketoki, driven by anxiety, stands up.]

THE INNER PART OF THE CASTLE. THE CORRIDOR.

[Maids and an old waiting woman gather in a group and look to one direction with frightened eyes. Taketoki briskly enters. The maids and the old waiting woman sit in haste. Taketoki is transfixed at the sight in the room, as if chilled to the bone.]

ASAJI'S ROOM.

[The light from the candles dimly flicker in the twilight. Asaji squats at the corner of the room, away from her sleeping-mattress and repeatedly makes a gesture of washing her hands. Her expressionless face like a Noh mask is emaciated with the torment of serious illness and now assumes a ghostly visage. The color of her eyes is already abnormal. While making a gesture of washing her hands, she murmurs in delirium.]

ASAJI.
Cannot be removed ... There, horrible blood stain. With all my washing, why doesn't it disappear, I wonder. O no, still smells of blood ... O these hands, why can they not be wiped clean?!

[Taketoki, struck with horror, stares at Asaji, but being unable to stand it anymore, runs to her.]

TAKETOKI.
Asaji! Asaji!

[Asaji is deaf to his screaming voice. She continues her gesture of washing her hands and babbles out in delirium.]

ASAJI.
Why is it that ... O this bloodstain ... too strongly stained on my hands to be removed. For all my washing, for all my washing ... reeks of blood ... this disgusting bloodstain.

[Taketoki is frightened out of his wits; trembling all over and staring at Asaji, he is rooted to the ground. Flurried cries can be heard in the distance. Taketoki comes to himself and

runs out.]

INSIDE THE CASTLE. THE COURTYARD.

[Soldiers, who have fallen into utter confusion, are screeching, beside themselves and running pell-mell. Taketoki dashes out.]

TAKETOKI.
You great fools! How dare you become upset and make such a noise at this crucial moment! Be quiet!

[One of the soldiers talks, with his face drawn.]

SOLDIER.
My Lord! Forest ... Forest ... Kumote Forest!

[The man points to the direction of the Front Gate and gasps for breath. Taketoki becomes irritated.]

TAKETOKI.
Kumote Forest? ... What do you mean?

One of the soldiers talks, trembling all over.

SOLDIER.
The forest has begun to move ... and is moving toward out castle!

Taketoki is shocked for a moment.

TAKETOKI.
What nonsense ... must be an illusion imagined by fools like you ... It's hardly possible that the forest moves.

He violently pushes the Soldiers away and runs up the Tower.

THE TOWER.

Taketoki comes running up the tower. He shoves aside the guard, who is frightened and rooted to the ground like an idiot and he draws his face near an observation hole with a jerk. Taketoki's face suddenly turns pale, thunderstruck.

OUTSIDE THE CASTLE. A PANORAMIC VIEW.

[The forest is slowly moving through the mist which hangs over the morning mist. And it is advancing towards the castle, slowly and steadily.]

THE TOWER.

[Taketoki is utterly at his wits' end. Over his face appears an indescribable horror. Like a beast in danger, Taketoki staggers, hesitates and then, trying to run away from the tower, he gets his feet on the stairs. Then he looks down and is petrified.]

INSIDE THE CASTLE. THE COURTYARD.

[Soldiers have gathered full to overflowing and are glaring up at Taketoki.]

THE TOWER AND THE COURTYARD.

[Taketoki loses his self-control. Soon he is barely able to put up a good front.]

TAKETOKI.

What ... what's the matter?! Don't desert your posts!

[Not a single Soldier answers him and they all stare fixedly at Taketoki. He glares at them, with distraught eyes and screams.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
To your posts! Return to your posts!

[The Soldiers are silent. Deprived of words, Taketoki turns pale. An arrow whistles from somewhere and grazes Taketoki's armor. Taketoki contorts his face with fear and screams.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
You cowards! Oh, I guessed your game! After killing me, you are going to surrender to the enemy's camp, with my head as a present!

[The Soldiers are silent. Another arrow whistles and lodges in the wadded silk garment of his armor. Taketoki is completely distraught.]

TAKETOKI [cont.]
You dogs! Traitors! It's high treason to murder your Lord!

[A shrill voice comes in a flash.]

VOICE.
Who murdered our former Lord?

[A shower of arrows converge upon Taketoki. He hurries to run into the tower. One of the Generals shoots an arrow at him. That arrow lodges in his back. Taketoki falters. A shower of arrows converge upon Taketoki. One of them pierces Taketoki's head. Taketoki, bristling with arrows like a hedgehog, falls headlong from the tower.]

OUTSIDE THE CASTLE.

[The forest silently and steadily advances in the morning mist. A gust of morning wind runs through and sweeps away the mist. It reveals that the moving forest is none other that Noriyasu's troops with their large and small cavalry camouflaged by twigs and branches. Noriyasu shouts to all of the troops.]

NORIYASU.
Our attacking forces can be seen from the castle! Put large and small horse contingents before you, and shelter yourselves behind them. Conceal yourselves among the branches and don't expose yourselves to the danger of arrows!

[The troops answer him and raise war cries. The morning breeze sweeps by. They solemnly advance. The morning sun suddenly casts its first bright ray across Noriyasu's forces.]

THE RUINS OF A CASTLE.

[Reeds growing thick and rank over the moat. A morning breeze running through those reeds. A sobbing pine tree rustles against the stone wall. Moss-grown stone walls. Water of the moat covered with green scum. "The Ruins of Kumonosu Castle." A decayed placard written as above. Everything looks desolate.]

SONG.
The attacking force was none other than the rustling reeds in the breeze. The war cries were none other than a breeze in the pine tree. The ruins show the fate of demonic men with treacherous desire. Life is the same now as in ancient times.

寄せ手見えしは
風の葦
鬨の音と聞こえしは
松の風
それ熱心の修羅の道
昔も今もかわりなし

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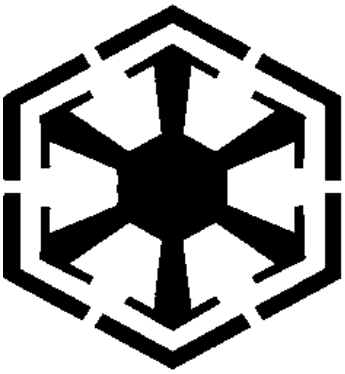
TRANSCRIPTION BY LILIT "BABA" YAGIAN (1978)